

Robyn Walpert- Rose, MPT, CST-D

**“CranioSacral Therapy is a gentle, hands on method of enhancing the flow of cerebrospinal fluid, blood and lymph. Thus, it facilitates the body's natural healing . It's positive effects are most apparent in the brain and spinal cord, the immune and hormonal systems, and in the alleviation of chronic dysfunction and pain.”** John E. Upledger , D.O., O.M.M.

Many common childhood conditions can be helped through the use of CranioSacral Therapy. Some of these conditions include: neurological, genetic and congenital anomalies ,allergies, ear infections, immune system dysfunctions, digestive issues , structural dysfunctions, emotional and behavioral issues, sensory processing dysfunction, learning disabilities, attention deficit, developmental delay and autistic spectrum disorders.

Although the list is quite extensive, and the possibilities endless, the following demonstrates some of the frequent challenges improved by the application of CranioSacral Therapy:

**Birth and Gestational Trauma:** Even the most perfect birth can be classified as slightly traumatic. Squeezing through the birth canal, twisting and turning to extreme degrees in order to leave the familiar environment of the womb and transition into this world, can be physically and emotionally stressful . The cranial bones are designed to mold and conform to allow for passage through the pelvis. Under normal circumstances, there are obvious variations in head shapes among newborns, which are meant to self-correct. However, there are often areas of increased strain or pressure which prevent this self-correction from occurring. With interventions such as labor inducing medications, C-section, Forceps or Vacuum extraction, there are often additional compromises which can influence the very delicate environment of the brain and spinal cord. Conditions such as colic, failure to thrive, poor feeding ability, reflux, digestive issues, ear infections, misshapen and flattened heads(plagiocephaly), and wry-neck(torticollis) are often symptoms related to these areas of adverse strain.

CranioSacral Therapy can help to diminish the sources of these adverse effects , restore normal adaptability, and enhance efficiency of the body during this critical period of rapid growth and development. Therefore, many of these possible complications can be improved or prevented.

**Cerebral Palsy (CP):** Refers to an abnormality or injury to the cerebrum, the large part of the brain which controls sensation and voluntary motor function. CP is caused by damage to this area during fetal development, during the birth process , or in the first few months of life, and is usually identified by age 3. This condition is often caused by a disturbance to the brain circulation before or during birth and may result from head injury, maternal infections during pregnancy, or illness in early infancy such as meningitis (an inflammation of the the membranes and fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord ).These membranes, fluid , and spinal cord are the same structures which comprise the CranioSacral System. Cerebral Palsy is considered a non-progressive , meaning that the damaged areas of the brain do not worsen. CranioSacral Therapy helps to improve circulation through the direct environment of the brain , and therefore may promote healing in areas that were damaged.

### **Developmental Delays, Learning Disabilities, and Sensory Processing Disorders:**

Behavior and skill acquisition are reliant on the ability of the nervous system to take in sensory information, process , integrate and organize it in a usable format to generate an appropriate response. Firstly, our nervous systems must be capable of modulation-the ability to adjust, adapt or respond to the proper degree .Modulation refers to the ability to get into the“just right” zone, and Self- regulation is the ability to maintain or sustain modulation under stress or challenge.

Modulation and Self-Regulation are functions of the brainstem, the area of the brain responsible for screening incoming information to discern what is dangerous and produce a survival response. If there is a problem in the brainstem, we are unable to discern what information is safe, or important to attend to .Therefore either everything feels unsafe and we become overreactive, or too little information is registering, and we need to seek input to get into a state of balance.

Everyone has a specific sensory input level they must reach and maintain to function appropriately. When we attain our modulation zone, our brainstem is organized, and we are able to be focused, engaged, interactive, purposeful, and maintain attention. Dysfunctions with Modulation and Self-regulation present themselves as behavioral challenges. Children with these brainstem challenges are those that we say“if only they could /would ... behave, sit still, be quiet, etc.” , or who seem to fall apart with certain activities or situations, or when demands are placed on them .

Sensory processing also includes Discrimination and Praxis , which refer to attainment and refinement of motor, language and cognitive skills. In order to Learn and Perform skills, we must first be able to maintain a modulated state. CranioSacral Therapy assists the body in finding a state of natural balance. There is a consistent finding of structural compression at the Occipital Cranial Base with Hyperactive children, and there are often significant restrictions in the temporal bones. CranioSacral Therapy techniques deal directly with maintaining and restoring balance within these same mechanisms responsible for Modulation and Self – Regulation , and improving the environment available for neuronal communication.

**Autism:** In addition to Processing Disorders as mentioned above, children with Autism have extremely tight IntraCranial Membranes, temporal bone and Cranial Base compression, and immune system compromise. CranioSacral Therapy is able to assist with improving the motion and flexibility of these structures, establishing more neural and social connection with these children.

**Speech ,Language , Feeding and Swallowing Dysfunctions:** These may often be related to an underlying Sensory Processing challenge. There are also usually significant areas of structural restrictions which may be impeding the ability of the tongue to position, or to maintain the motor control required for these activities. There may be areas of compression associated with these at the base of the neck and throat , and in the temporal (ear) bones. We utilize specific techniques to assist in releasing restrictions in these areas, thereby enhancing the ability of these structures to function more optimally.

**Seizures:** Seizures occur when there is a sudden discharge of electrical potential within the nervous system. CranioSacral Therapy can be very effective at assisting the body to dissipate this energy in a gentle way by releasing obstructions which may be creating this sudden onset. Many children have been able to decrease the frequency and intensity of seizures, and therefore the use of medications through CranioSacral Treatment.

**Strabismus(Crossed or Wandering Eyes), Nystagmus( jumping eyes), and other Vision Concerns:** The eyes and corresponding nerves are housed within an area of several connecting cranial bones . The pathways of the motor nerves to the eyes pass within the 2 layers of Intracranial Membranes. If there are abnormal strains or pressures influencing these areas, it can lead to oculomotor dysfunction. CranioSacral Therapy has been know to alleviate the need for surgical correction of these problems, and may significantly enhance visual clarity even with normal vision.

#### **MicroCephaly, Lissencephaly , Dysgenesis of Brain Tissue-**

Microcephaly is a condition in which the circumference of the head is smaller than normal because the brain has not developed properly or has stopped growing. Microcephaly may be present at birth or develop within the first few years of life. It is most often caused by abnormalities that interfere with the growth of the cerebral cortex during the early months of fetal development.

Lissencephaly, which literally means *smooth brain*, is a rare brain formation disorder characterized by the lack of normal convolutions (folds) in the brain. It is caused by defective neuronal migration, the process in which nerve cells move from their place of origin to their permanent location.

Dysgenesis or Agenesis refers to a lack of development of an organ, which may include the brain.

CranioSacral Therapy has been very effective for many children with these conditions ,allowing them to surpass limitations and achieve functional status that was not believed to be possible. Children who were told that they would never be able to hold a bottle, sit independently ,walk, or talk have been able to accomplish these, and many other goals, through CranioSacral Treatment.

**CranioSacral Therapy is a gentle, non-invasive therapy based on principles of Osteopathic Medicine,which include: 6 the body is a self-correcting mechanism always seeking to return to balance, and structure and function are inter-related. In addressing areas which are restricting physical structures, we are thereby able to improve their ability to function in a more efficient manner. Although there are no guarantees for outcomes, and each situation is highly individual , CranioSacral Therapy has many benefits for children with various types of diagnoses and challenges .**